



Pay-As-You-Throw Success Stories

IN A GROWING NUMBER

of communities across the nation, pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) programs are working. This collection of testimonials presents first-hand stories from communities that faced significant municipal solid waste (MSW) challenges—issues like increasing amounts of waste, rising disposal costs, and uncertain MSW budgets—and were able to use PAYT to put their solid waste management back on track.

While the specific issues varied, the leaders of these communities recognized that their old MSW programs needed to change. More reliable funding sources were needed, recycling programs had to be expanded, and, most importantly, they had to begin getting their residents to generate less waste in the first place. PAYT turned out to be the answer.

Real-World Results

The PAYT concept is simple—rather than paying for trash collection and disposal indirectly (often through property taxes), residents under this program are asked to

pay for each container of waste they generate. It gives them an incentive to reduce waste, and it can be very effective: after implementing PAYT, communities typically report reductions in waste amounts of 25 to 35 percent, including significant increases in recycling. To date, nearly 2,000 communities across the country have successfully implemented PAYT.

Learn From Successful Communities

For communities considering PAYT, making the switch may seem intimidating. MSW planners may be concerned, for example, that their elected officials will not support the effort. Other planners may feel that the design process is too complicated or that local residents might resist the new program.

Fortunately, decision-makers considering PAYT have an important resource they can turn to: the experience of the many communities that have preceded them. When it comes to questions about how to evaluate, design, and implement PAYT, it's the communities that have successfully adopted a program of their own that can best provide the answers.

Some of the communities featured here had to develop impressive solutions to daunting challenges before their program could become a reality. In most cases, however, these planners simply saw an opportunity in PAYT. They researched the issue carefully and developed a program that, it turned out, met or exceeded their expectations. However they came about, the programs described in this collection are filled with important lessons for interested community planners.

The Bottom Line

Perhaps the single biggest lesson illustrated by these stories is that there is no one “right” way to implement PAYT—just as there is no single compelling reason for communities to adopt this type of program. Every community has a different story to tell and a different lesson to teach. Nonetheless, nearly all the communities detailed here have experienced three specific types of benefits as a result of adopting PAYT:

It’s economically sustainable. PAYT is an effective tool for communities struggling to cope with soaring MSW management costs. Well-designed programs enable communities to generate the revenues they need to cover all MSW program costs, including the costs of complementary programs such as recycling and composting. Residents benefit, too, since they finally have the opportunity to take control of their trash bills.

It’s environmentally sustainable. Because of the incentive it provides residents to put less waste at the curb, communities with programs in place have reported significant increases in recycling and reductions in waste. Less waste and more recycling mean that fewer natural resources need to be extracted.

It’s fair. One of the most important advantages may be the fairness PAYT offers to community residents. When the cost of managing trash is hidden in taxes, or charged at a flat rate, residents who recycle and prevent waste end up subsidizing their neighbors’ wastefulness. Under this kind of program, residents pay only for what they throw away.

For More Information

This collection highlights successful strategies for implementing all types of PAYT programs in all kinds of communities. EPA has developed additional materials for anyone interested in learning more. For individuals looking for general information about how these programs work, EPA is making available fact sheets, a complete PAYT guidebook, and other materials. For local solid waste planners interested in specific ideas about how to bring PAYT to their community, EPA has developed a comprehensive set of tools—based on lessons from pioneering communities like the ones described here—to help them design and implement a successful program.

All of these products are based on real-world information that can help planners and others as they search for economically and environmentally sustainable solutions to today’s solid waste management challenges. To find out more about EPA’s collection of products, call the Pay-as-you-throw Helpline toll free at 888-EPA-PAYT.



Printed on paper that contains at least 20 percent postconsumer fiber.

PAY-AS-YOU-THROW SUCCESS STORIES

Poquoson, Virginia

Population: **11,500**

Type of Community: **Suburban**

Type of Program: **Bags**

Program Start Date: **July 1992**

With pay-as-you-throw, we've had the largest amount of recyclables collected in our nine-community regional recycling program for four years.

Getting Started: Why Pay-As-You-Throw?

In the fall of 1991, we decided to shut down a very successful drop-off recycling center and join a regional curbside program the next spring. Our main reason for going with the curbside program was that we knew we could get better citizen participation and further increase recycling. Because of the success of the drop-off program, we were asked by the city council to review the city trash program and develop a plan to improve it.

Our group was made up of about a dozen interested citizens, two city employees, and two city councilmen. One of the first things we did was to develop the following mission statement: "To review every aspect of waste management in Poquoson to maximize REDUCTION, REUSE, and RECYCLING, and to recommend ways to accomplish this with the minimum cost to the taxpayer."

This statement was read at the start of every meeting to make sure we stayed focused on our agreed-upon goal. After discussing all

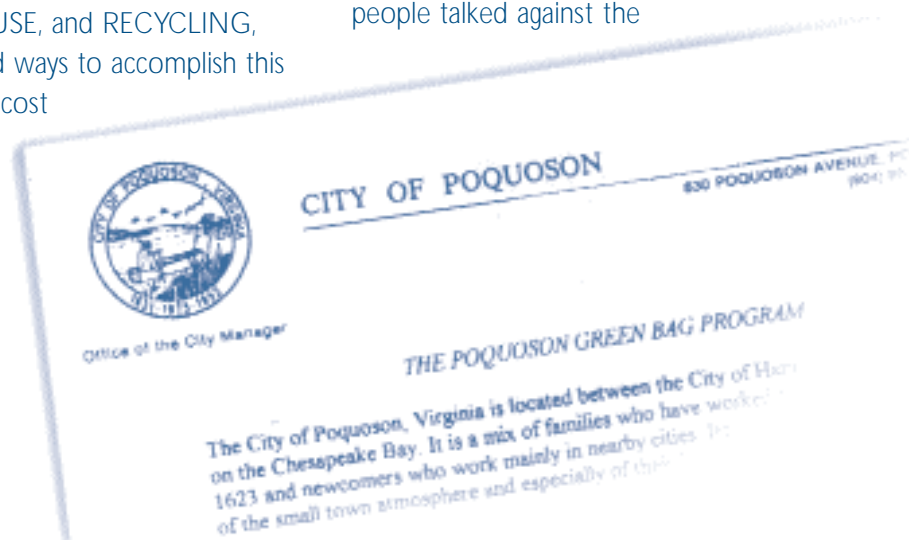
types of different programs, we decided to focus on a fairly new system that was volume-based and where people paid for the amount of trash they discarded, rather than a flat-fee system.

Bringing the Opposition on Board

We called and talked to people involved with these different programs and found out what problems and successes they were having. We eventually ended up with two three-inch binders full of information.

After many meetings and sometimes heated discussions, we were ready to submit our basic recommendations to the city council and the public. At the public hearing, seven people talked against the

Two years after the program started, a city councilman who had voted against the new program came up to me in a local store with a smile on his face and simply said 'You know, you were right.' Then I knew the program was really working.





plan, and the city council seemed split on the issue. The word “change” is usually not well accepted in Poquoson. We invited the seven speakers against our plan to join our committee and work with us to develop a final recommendation. In the end, the six that joined us supported the final plan.

Bags, Tags, or Cans?

Another big question was: Do we use bags, stickers, or containers? Our research showed that stickers are being counterfeited in one city and that there is no effective way to control bag size. Containers required a large, upfront capital cost, and we wanted to develop a program that required no additional cost to the city. Furthermore, we are a very windy city—and typically after a trash pickup empty trash cans roll all over the neighborhoods! Since all of our trash was being sent to a waste-to-energy (WTE) plant and not a landfill, plastic bags were not a negative as far as disposal was concerned. We decided to use plastic bags.

How Best To Distribute the Bags?

Although many cities sell their bags from city office locations, this puts a big burden on city personnel and can be inconvenient for citizens. We talked with all

our grocery, drug, and convenience stores and set up a program in which they would sell the bags and turn over all the proceeds to the city after they were sold. In other words, they would make no profit on selling the bags, but also would have no investment in them. It was pointed out to them that this would be a community service.

Spreading the Word

The next step was informing the public of the new program, how it would work, and when it would start. We prepared news releases for our local papers, wrote articles for the city newsletter, and made a videotape of the program using local talent that was then shown on the city public access channel. We also trained speakers about the subject and made them available to any groups that were interested.

“We’re number one every time”

We are part of a regional recycling program with nine other cities and counties. Because of the way our trash program encourages recycling, our city has had the largest amount of recyclables collected per house, per month for the entire four years we have been in the program. We’re not number one most of the time, we’re number one every time.

Dover, New Hampshire

Population: **26,000**

Type of Community: **Rural**

Type of Program: **Bag and Tag**

Program Start Date: **October 1991**

Pay-as-you-throw has proven to be a very effective means of managing Dover's solid waste.

Getting Started: Why Pay-As-You-Throw?

The City of Dover is a community of approximately 26,000 people on New Hampshire's seacoast. Our municipal landfill was closed in 1979, and at that time the city entered into a relationship with a private hauler for collection and disposal at a privately owned and operated landfill. The city collected approximately 24,000 tons of trash each year, of which approximately 11,000 tons were residential refuse.

Before 1989, Dover had no recycling program. Any and all trash residents wished to discard was left at the curb, and 3½ truck routes were needed to collect the refuse daily. The cost of refuse collection and disposal was escalating rapidly. Responding to citizen pressure, the

Dover city council created an ad hoc committee on recycling in the fall of 1989.

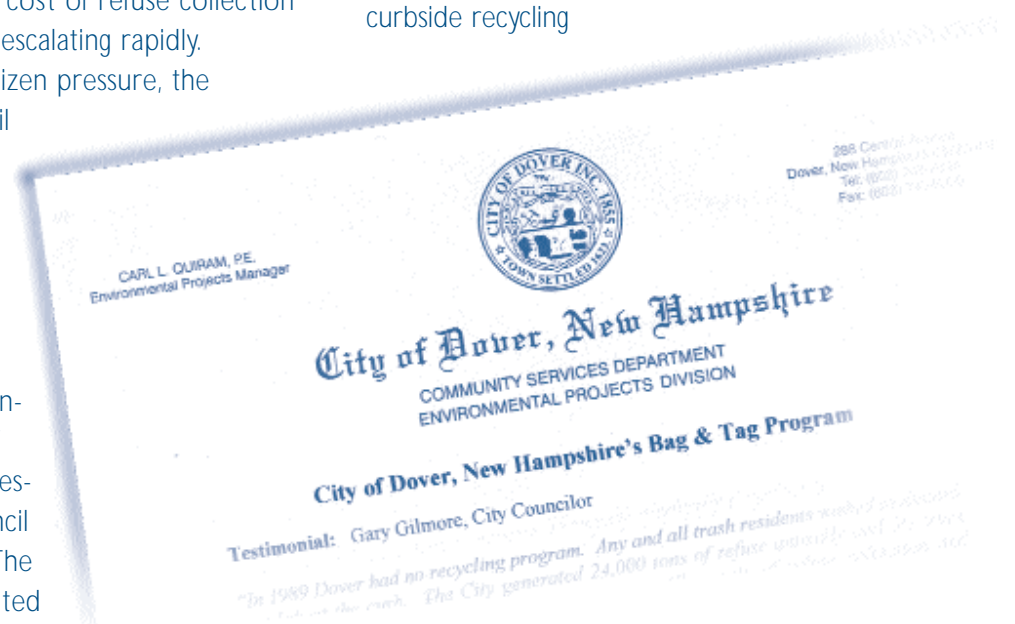
The committee, chaired by Gary Gilmore, city councilor, consisted of eight interested residents and a council representative. The committee reported

back to the council 4 months later with 10 recommendations.

The committee urged the immediate establishment of a drop-off recycling center designed to collect a wide range of materials. The recycling center opened in May 1990. It quickly became very popular and a source of civic pride.

The recycling center was run initially as an all-volunteer effort. After a few months, the city hired a solid waste coordinator, who began working in conjunction with the ad hoc committee and several city councilors to urge the establishment of curbside recycling.

We argued that the costs for producing wastes should be borne by the user and the costs of recycling, because of its social and environmental benefits, should be borne by the city.





and the bag and tag program, which was then unknown in northern New England.

Overcoming Public Dissent

The three public meetings we held were filled with heated vocal dissent. However, we soon convinced the public to accept these programs with a couple of basic premises. The first premise was that recyclable materials are a commodity, and anything that is disposed of in the landfill is waste. We argued that the costs for producing wastes should be borne by the user and that the costs of recycling, because of its social and environmental benefits, should be borne by the city.

In September 1991, the city began curbside collection of recyclables, and a month later the bag and tag program was implemented. In conjunction with the establishment of these programs, the city council created a Citizen's Solid Waste Advisory Committee responsible for overseeing these programs.

Since the program was initiated we have had annual public meetings and have raised the price once. We have not had any significant public dissent at any meetings since the program's inception. Overall, the program has been well received by the community and has proven to be a very effective means of managing Dover's solid waste.

How Does It Work?

The city no longer provides for the collection and disposal of private dumpsters. Commercial generators pay the fees associated with the collection and disposal. For the residents, payment of the collection and disposal of wastes is accomplished through the purchase of bags and/or adhesive tags.

A special revenue fund was established to pay for the collection, disposal, and administrative costs associated with our residential solid waste. The fees generated by the sale of the bags and tags go into this fund as revenue. The goal is to maintain a neutral fund balance that can sustain the program, but not to build a large balance.

Success: Saving Money and Reducing Waste

As mentioned earlier, Dover used to produce approximately 11,000 tons per year of residential solid waste. Last year, we produced approximately 3,900 tons. In 1990 our budget for solid waste was approximately \$1.2 million. Next year's budget (including trash and recycling) is approximately \$878,000. Our current recycling rate is well over 50 percent for our residential waste stream—despite it being strictly voluntary.

Dover's success story was compiled by Gary Gilmore, City Councilor, and Carl Quiram, P.E., Environmental Projects Manager, (603) 743-6094.

PAY-AS-YOU-THROW SUCCESS STORIES

Gainesville, Florida

Population:

96,000

Type of Community:

Suburban

Type of Program:

Cart-based Cans

Program Start Date:

October 1994

The results of the first year of our program were amazing. After implementing pay-as-you-throw, we watched our recycling rates soar!

Why Pay-As-You-Throw?

Before variable-rate pricing, the cost to individuals for service was hidden. Residential users did not have an apparent reason to limit their disposal habits. Now, Gainesville's variable-rate pricing generates a visible monthly charge that has resulted in a substantial reduction in both solid waste and the costs associated with its disposal.

How Does It Work?

In July 1994, the city of Gainesville entered into a contract with Waste Management of Central Florida, Inc., for the collection of residential solid waste and commingled recyclables and into another contract with Boone Waste Industries, Inc., for the collection of yard trash for recycling. The new contract for solid waste service included a variable rate for solid waste collection service: residents paid \$13.50, 15.96 or 19.75 per month according to whether they placed 35, 64 or 96 gallons of solid waste at the curb for collection. Recycling service was unlimited. While residents had been receiving service for the collection of recyclables since 1989, the implementation of this program added brown paper bags, corrugated cardboard and phone books to the list of items recycled. The results of the first year of this program were amazing. The amount of solid waste collected decreased 20% and the recyclables recovered increased 35%! The total disposal tonnage decreased from 22,120 to 18,116. This resulted in a savings of \$186,200 to the residential sector, or \$7.95 per home.

Gainesville's move to pay-as-you-throw did more than reduce waste and increase recycling—it created a more equitable system for residents.



City of Gainesville

SOLID WASTE DEPARTMENT

July 25, 1996

Janice L. Canterbury
MC: 5306W
U.S. EPA
Municipal & Industrial Solid Waste Div.
401 M Street SW
Washington DC 20460

Dear Ms. Canterbury:

In July of 1994, the City of Gainesville entered into a contract with Waste Management of Central Florida, Inc., for the collection of residential solid waste and commingled recyclable collection, and another contract with Boone Waste Industries, Inc., for the collection of yard trash for recycling. The new contract for solid waste service included a variable rate for solid waste collection service: residents paid \$13.50, 15.96 or 19.75 per month according to whether they placed 35, 64 or 96 gallons of solid waste at the curb for collection. Recycling service was unlimited. While residents had been receiving service for the collection of recyclables since 1989, the implementation of this program added brown paper bags, corrugated cardboard and phone books to the list of items recycled. The results of the first year of this program were amazing. The amount of solid waste collected decreased 20% and the recyclables recovered increased 35%! The total disposal tonnage decreased from 22,120 to 18,116. This resulted in a savings of \$186,200 to the residential sector, or \$7.95 per home.

Gainesville's move to a cart based, variable rate residential collection system did more than just increase the rate of recovery and minimize disposal needs. The distribution of system costs is more equitable. Residents make the choice of service delivery based on individual waste generation habits. This reduces the level of subsidy that unlimited, flat rate collection systems encounter.

Prior to variable rate pricing, the individualized cost for service was hidden. Residential users did not have an apparent reason for limiting their disposal habits. Gainesville's variable rate pricing creates a monthly charge that is visible which has resulted in a substantial reduction of solid waste and the costs associated with disposal.

If you have any further questions regarding our new program, please contact the Solid Waste Department at (352) 336-1111.



residents pay \$13.50, \$15.96, or \$19.75 per month according to whether they place 35, 64, or 96 gallons of solid waste at the curb for collection.

Recycling service is unlimited. While residents have had curbside collection of recyclables since 1989, the implementation of this program added brown paper bags, corrugated cardboard, and phone books to the list of items recycled.

Planning Ahead

Planning ahead was critical to the success of Gainesville's program. It was crucial for us to order our carts and public outreach publications far in advance of program implementation.

Success: Saving Money and Reducing Waste

The results of the first year of our program were amazing. The amount of solid waste collected decreased 18 percent, and the recyclables recovered increased 25 percent! The total disposal tonnage decreased from 22,120 to 18,116. This resulted in a savings of \$186,200 to the residential sector, or \$7.95 per home.

Gainesville's move to a cart-based, variable-rate residential collection system did more than just increase the rate of recovery and minimize disposal needs. The distribution of system costs is more equitable. Residents make the choice of service delivery based on individual waste-generation habits. This reduces the level of subsidy that unlimited, flat-rate collection systems encounter.